

FOUGHT LIKE HEROES

TWO BOLD ATTACKS ON BRAZIL'S NAVY BY PARAGUAYANS.

River Steamers Fitted Against Armed Warships—Led to Victory by a Brave Pilot—Twelve Hundred Picked Men in Canoes Attack the Brazilian Ironclads.

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APAN'S wonderful naval victory on Yalu river Sept. 17 doubled and quadrupled the already keen popular interest in naval exploits. The exciting deeds of the civil war, adding fresh laurels for American tars, the creation of the white squadron and the competition among great naval powers for superiority in equipment, together with the unknown destructive power of modern inventions and appliances, combine to sharpen the appetite for contests that shall decide something and prove who and what rules the wave. Is it the nation with the swiftest ships, or the toughest armor, or the most powerful guns, or the one that can command the best fighting men? A very modern authority, trained to the deck, says that it all depends finally upon the "man behind the gun."

This battle on the Yalu has been called by Europeans the greatest of the century. Some of its incidents, it is widely claimed, have not been paralleled in modern times, except in the Paraguay river in the war between Brazil and Paraguay. If so, there are more points than one of similarity between the Yellow war and that in South America in the sixties. Brazil invaded Uruguay in 1864 to close the Paraguay and its outlet, the Rio de la Plata, to the interior countries, and the plucky little republic of Paraguay declared war. It was like the challenge of David to Goliath. Brazil, vast in territory, was also rich in material, men and ships. Little Paraguay had nothing except some money, a few patriots and a cause. Ships, guns and ammunition, ordered from Europe while the conflict was impending, did not arrive until Brazil had a fleet in the river and Paraguay under blockade. In hopes of raising the blockade by destroying the Brazilian ships and possibly capturing them for his own use, President Lopez, ruler of Paraguay, instituted two separate attacks which, because of their boldness and the desperation of the fighting, have become notorious in naval annals. The stories have not been told in this country, and readers who have followed the course of the war in Japan may compare the naval events of these wars with those of the civil war.

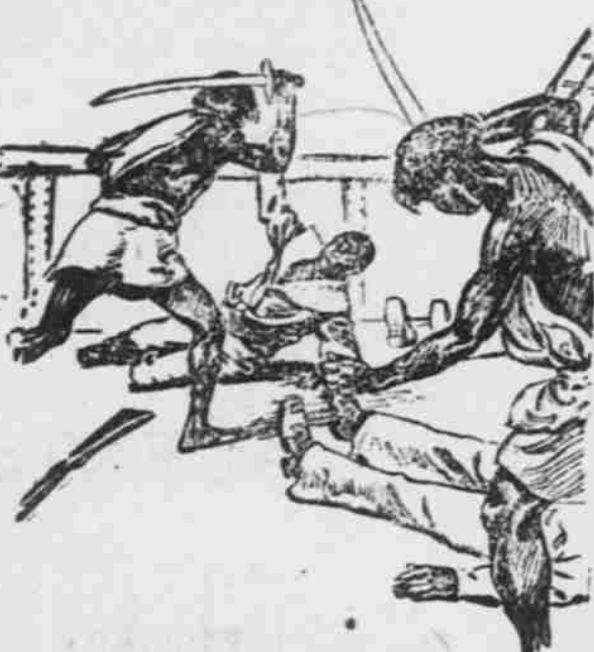
The first great battle on the Paraguay took place on the Itacumbatu, an inlet near the southern border of Paraguay, in June, 1865. Early in April a Brazilian fleet of nine sailing steamers had ascended the Paraguay and anchored below the mouth of the Parana. Lopez decided to capture the vessels by boarding attacks and gathered a force of 800 men, which embarked on river steamers, rigged out and manned as gunboats. An English engineer on board the flagship advised Lopez to run his vessels down at night close to the Brazilians and at daylight send each of them, nine in number, to lie alongside an enemy's ship and board it. Lopez's followers were the bravest men known to modern war and would fight to the death every time, but Lopez ordered his fleet commander to run past the Brazilians, then turn and attack. After numerous delays the nine ships steamed past the Brazilian anchorage ground, effecting a complete surprise. The Brazilians had no steam up and could easily have been run down and overpowered. The gunners of the anchored ships, however, opened fire upon the dauntless enemy sailing past, exploding a shot in the boilers of the Igurey which killed 23 men, and also one in the Jejuí, which left her helpless. In passing the Paraguayans returned the fire as best they could with their small cannon. The fleet of Lopez carried 34 guns, while the Brazilians mounted 59.

The experienced fighting men who witnessed their maneuvers concluded that Lopez would lose his own ship in place of capturing a new fleet. One such spectator was General Bruges, a Paraguayan commanding some land batteries opposite the Brazilian fleet. Although astounded at the sight of the fleets recklessly plunging into Brazilian waters, he did not lose his head, but rightly inferred that the enemy would pursue, and in pursuing run aground past his guns. The Brazilian admiral mistook the plan of the Paraguayans entirely and believed that they had run down below him to cut him off from the lower fleet and friendly forts, so he made all haste to run through the fleet which had got between him and his base. In the haste and excitement of the passage two of the ships took a side channel under the range of General Bruges' batteries, which speedily riddled and sank the Je-

an saber. But his dying order was heard above the din, and the vessel slipped away from the embrace of her enemies, who dared not rake her with grape for fear of killing their friends swarming on her main decks. At this time a hero came to the front on the Brazilian fleet. The Brazilian admiral had run through the enemy's line in a panic, but seeing two of his ships left behind was afraid to proceed down the river without attempting to recover them. He ordered his vessels about, but became speechless with fear when it came to giving orders to fight. The chief pilot of the fleet was an Italian, with the blood of old Mediterranean seadogs in his veins. Being on the flagship, the Amazonas, where the confusion of orders was notorious, he usurped command and ordered the Amazonas to "go at" the Paraguayans full drive. Being a heavy vessel, she made a capital ram and quickly rode down the Paraguay, at the same time clearing her decks with grape. Next the Marquis de Olinda and the Jejuí, which, with the Tacuari, had held the Paranahyba at their mercy, were cut down by ramming or shots from the six heavy guns of the Amazonas. In brief, this mammoth ship, too high out of water for boarding from the low Paraguayan steamers, drove through the Paraguayans like a tornado. Four battleships and two steam launches carrying a gun each were destroyed, four launches captured and the Paraguayan Igurey sent off up the river with a hole through her boiler and the Tacuari covering her retreat. The English engineer, whose advice had been despised, saved the four steamers which got back to the Paraguayan line.

For more than three years the war continued, calling for the most terrible sacrifices on the part of the Paraguayans. Lopez ruled with a rod of iron. The outer world hated and cursed him for a pirate and usurper. His soldiers had no arms but old flintlocks, except as they captured them, and cannon and ammunition were made in the country or taken from the Brazilians in battle. The heroism of Lopez's followers under those conditions can scarcely be paralleled. They were Indians of the line of the Incas, with thrilling traditions behind them and warrior blood beneath their dark skins. They fought against enormous odds and never succumbed until pinned to the earth with bayonets. Before the war ended the country had been depopulated of men and boys, and the women urged on this self immolation by giving up their jewels to swell the exchequer and by shouldering muskets in battle.

In March, 1868, Lopez selected 1,200 of these men, the pick of all his valiant armies, to make a boarding attack upon a



BOARDERS AT WORK.

fleet of Brazilian ironclads lying in the river below Humaita. The men were all good swimmers and divers, with the daring and hardy habits of their race. The ironclads were eight in number, and the boarders, armed with carbines, revolvers, hatchets and hand grenades, embarked in 48 canoes, divided into eight sections, one for each ironclad. The flotilla got ready in a thicket of reeds on the river bank, and the canoes were overhung with leafy branches to resemble the floating island occasionally seen in the Paraguay river. Setting out just before daylight the 2d of March, the canoes drifted under stealthy paddles and nearly reached the fleet when the island collided with a Brazilian guard-boat. The astounded guard backed off and pulled for the nearest ironclad, the double turret Lima Barrios, followed in the mad haste by the canoe men, who broke their sections, 14 going at the Lima Barrios, 12 at the Cabral and the others scattering to attack the ones lying at a distance. The guard alarm boat and the Paraguayan canoes struck the Lima Barrios at the same time. The crew ran inside, closing the hatches, but the Paraguayans swarmed over the decks, cutting down all who were shut outside. Then a bloody fight took place at the towers, where revolvers were used on both sides. The Brazilian captain and his first officer were wounded in the hand to hand fight, and horrible slaughter took place inside the towers and ports where the Paraguayans hurled their hand grenades. The Cabral was completely surprised by the canoe loads of boarders, but her crew had time to go into their casemate. The Paraguayans swarmed over her sides, fighting with carbines and revolvers through the ports. Their own dense ranks, however, suffered terribly from the shots of the Brazilians, for which they retaliated with the deadly hand grenades, hurled through the ports, down smokestacks and through openings cut in the hatches. The Cabral had no steam on and couldn't throw hot water, so she soon became a helpless captive.

Two ironclads next in line, the Salado and Herval, received some warning and deluged their assailants with grape before they could leap from their canoes. Farther off the Brazil, a ten gunner, got up steam and made for the cluster of vessels where the battle was raging so fiercely. Coming abreast of the Cabral, she swept her decks with grape, then lay alongside the Lima Barrios. The Paraguayans upon Barrios stood a couple of volleys of canister from the guns of the Brazil, then jumped for their boats. The horrible slaughter of the grape was more than outdone when the loaded canoes were caught between the sides of the grinding hulls. A few of the Paraguayans reached the water and were given the choice of surrender or death by shooting. They chose the latter, and the Brazilians got but 13 prisoners out of 36 canoe loads, or 900 boarders, involved in the disaster. On the decks of the Lima Barrios and Cabral lay 140 bodies of the Paraguayans. The wounded victims who died after jumping into the water and those killed by Brazilian marksmen when swimming away swelled the loss to 400 killed. Romantic in purpose to the highest degree, the capture of a fleet with which to maintain freedom, and marked at every stage by the loftiest heroism, the attack on the ironclads off Yaya has no parallel in modern naval annals.

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